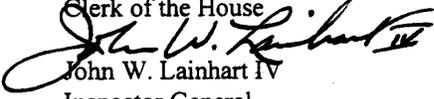


John W. Lainhart IV
Inspector General

Office of Inspector General
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-9990

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robin H. Carle
Clerk of the House

FROM: 
John W. Lainhart IV
Inspector General

DATE: December 31, 1996

SUBJECT: Audit Report - Opportunities Exist To Improve The Management Of The
Office Of The Clerk (Report No. 96-CLK-14)

This is our final report on the audit of the operations of the Office of the Clerk (Clerk). This audit was part of our annual audit plan and was approved by the Committee on House Oversight. The objective of our review was to provide an operational assessment of the Clerk during the 104th Congress. In this report, we identified four findings and one "other matters" issue, and made five recommendations for corrective action.

In response to our November 18, 1996 draft report, your office fully concurred with our findings and recommendations. The December 18, 1996 management response is incorporated into this final report and included in its entirety as an appendix.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by your staff. If you have any questions or require additional information regarding this report, please call me or Craig W. Silverthorne at x61250.

cc: Speaker of the House
Majority Leader of the House
Minority Leader of the House
Chairman, Committee on House Oversight
Ranking Minority Member, Committee on House Oversight
Members, Committee on House Oversight

OPPORTUNITIES EXIST TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

Report No. 96-CLK-14
December 31, 1996

RESULTS IN BRIEF

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of the 104th Congress, the House of Representatives (House) undertook extensive measures to improve operations and efficiencies, as well as financial reporting and accountability. Each of the three Officers of the House set baseline objectives in order to prioritize their transition roles. The Office of the Clerk (Clerk) had the following three baseline objectives when the 104th Congress convened:

- Improve the overall efficiency of the Offices of the Clerk by reducing the number of departments, personnel and operating costs.
- Improve various Legislative Services via reorganization.
- Update various computer and electronic systems to allow increased use of electronic information.

The Clerk fully implemented all three baseline objectives during the 104th Congress. The Clerk also collects performance measurement data for a number of performance indicators and uses the results of this data as the basis for improving operations. In addition, the Clerk has completed a number of other significant actions during the 104th Congress to improve operations, increase accountability, and improve resource management. These improvements include the following:

- **New Policies and Procedures** - In July 1996, the Clerk developed personnel policies and procedures, which supplemented the House's *Personnel Policies and Procedures*, adopted by the Committee on House Oversight (CHO) in March 1996. Also, in July 1996, the Clerk issued the *Computer Policy and Procedure Manual* which established rules and guidelines to assist employees using personal computers, local area networks, the House network, and the Internet. It also established the Office of Legislative Computer Systems as the technical clearinghouse for computer coordination and use within the Clerk's office. Personnel and computer policies and procedures were not available prior to the 104th Congress.
- **Improved Management Control Systems and Internal Forms** - The Clerk's support staff has instituted various computer spreadsheet programs and personnel forms to improve internal operations. The computer spreadsheet programs are used for the management and control of equipment purchases, budget implementation, execution,

and monitoring, staffing levels, and paid leave. The Clerk has also developed and implemented the use of written personnel description forms, describing each position's job summary, major duties, job requirements, and supervisory controls. The form is also used in performance evaluations of Clerk personnel which provides a uniform, structured approach for rating staff performance. Prior to the 104th Congress, there were no written personnel description forms and no formal performance evaluations.

- **Improved Updating of the Parliamentary Journals** - The Clerk's Office is responsible for preparing the Legislative Journal which is the permanent parliamentary record of the House. At the end of the 103rd Congress, the Clerk had only completed the Journals for House actions through 1989. During the 104th Congress, the Clerk was able to re-deploy personnel and finalize the Journals for the years 1990 through 1991 and has a plan in place to bring the Journals current by the end of Calendar Year 1997.
- **Prior Office of Inspector General (OIG) Audit Recommendations** - The Clerk has undertaken measures to improve the generation and dissemination of legislative information. This was in response to an OIG audit report entitled *Opportunities Exist To Improve The Generation Of Legislative Information In The Office Of The Clerk* (Report No. 95-CLK-13, dated July 18, 1996). This audit produced four recommendations relating to the Clerk's Office. The Clerk has fully implemented three of the four recommendations and is in the process of implementing the remaining recommendation.

The Clerk's immediate office has managed its duties in a *hands on* manner and at the same time empowered its employees to make improvements in their daily tasks. As a result, the Clerk has made improvements in process and product while reducing appropriated positions from 302 in 1994 to 282 in 1996 and reducing total non-capital appropriations to \$13,807,000 in 1996. Additionally, employee morale appears good as evidenced by the fact that, of the approximately 80 Job Activity Questionnaires (JAQs) and 20 employee interviews, all of the feedback suggested that conditions have improved.

Although the Clerk has implemented numerous initiatives, opportunities exist for the Clerk to utilize staff more efficiently, achieve cost savings, and operate more effectively. This is indicated by the following:

- The cloak rooms appear to have several underutilized personnel positions. Potential annual savings of at least \$286,000 could be achieved by consolidating functions and reducing positions.
- In the Office of the General Counsel (OGC) a five to five ratio of administrative/support management/professional staff exists, which appears excessive. Annual savings of at least \$42,000 could be achieved by reducing the administrative/support staff.
- Housing costs for the Page Program are not fully covered by Residence Hall fees and security deposits. As a result, the House is subsidizing the program by at least \$166,320 a year.

- Page Program instructional staff appear to be underutilized. Annual savings of at least \$312,000 could be achieved by restructuring the staff and reducing unnecessary positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Clerk:

1. Evaluate the staffing levels by conducting a position management study of the two cloak rooms and develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to eliminate the following positions, if supported by the evaluation:
 - The Assistant Manager position in each cloak room.
 - A maintenance position in each cloak room.
 - The food manager or assistant food manager position in each cloak room.
2. Perform a position management study to review the OGC staffing and develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to restructure the staffing of the OGC and eliminate at least the Paralegal position.
3. Perform a more detailed study of the Page Program to further quantify and refine the economic impacts associated with Page housing, and submit a proposal to the Page Board, for their review and action.
4. Perform a more detailed study of the Page School staffing levels and submit a proposal to the Page Board for their review and action.
5. Work with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Sergeant at Arms to establish a consistent system for tracking and managing the implementation of prior audit recommendations.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

On December 18, 1996, the Clerk of the House formally concurred with the findings and recommendations in this report. According to her response to the five recommendations, the Clerk agreed to (1) do a position management study in the two cloak rooms and forward a proposal to the Committee on House Oversight during Fiscal Year (FY) 1997, (2) begin a staffing review in the Office of the General Counsel and forward a proposal to the Committee on House Oversight during FY 1997, (3) study the Page Program to quantify and refine the economic impacts associated with Page housing and submit a proposal to the House Page Board during FY 1997, (4) perform a detailed study of the Page School staffing levels and submit a proposal to the Page Board during FY 1997, and (5) coordinate with the

Chief Administrative Officer and Sergeant at Arms in establishing a system for tracking and managing the implementation of prior audit recommendations.

OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL COMMENTS

The Clerk's planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendations.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Election of the Clerk. The Rules of the House of Representatives effective for the 104th Congress (dated January 4, 1995) detail the duties of the Speaker of the House (Rule I), the Election of Officers (Rule II), the duties of the Office of the Clerk (Rule III) and the duties of the Standing Committees, including the Committee on House Oversight (Rule X 1.(h), 4.(d)(1) and 4.(d)(2)).

Rule II for the election of Officers states:

“There shall be elected by a viva voce vote, at the commencement of each Congress, to continue in office until their successors are chosen and qualified, a Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Chief Administrative Officer, and Chaplain, each of whom shall take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, and for the true and faithful discharge of the duties of his office to the best of his knowledge and ability, and to keep the secrets of the House; and each shall appoint all of the employees of his department provided for by law. The Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, and Chief Administrative Officer may be removed by the House or by the Speaker.”

Thus, the Clerk is chosen and qualified and submitted to the House for a voice vote. The Clerk may be removed either by the House or by the Speaker.

Role of Committee on House Oversight (CHO). The CHO has certain responsibilities detailed in Rule X regarding the Clerk, including:

- 1.(h)(1) “Appropriations from accounts for committee salaries and expenses (except for the Committee on Appropriations), House Information Systems, and allowances and expenses of Members, House Officers and administrative offices of the House.”
- 1.(h)(2) “Auditing and settling of all accounts described in subparagraph (1).”
- 1.(h)(3) “Employment of persons by the House, including clerks for Members and committees, and reporters of debates.”
- 1.(h)(6) “Expenditures of accounts described in subparagraph (1).”
- 1.(h)(8) “Matters relating to printing and correction of the Congressional Record.”
- 1.(h)(16) “Measures relating to the compensation, retirement and other benefits of the Members, officers, and employees of the Congress.”
- 4.(d)(1) “examining all bills, amendments, and joint resolutions after passage by the House and, in cooperation with the Senate, examining all bills and joint resolutions which shall have passed both Houses to see that they are

correctly enrolled, forthwith presenting those which originated in the House to the President of the United States in person after their signature by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and reporting the fact and date of such presentation to the House; and”

- 4.(d)(2) “providing policy direction for, and oversight of, the Clerk, Sergeant at Arms, Chief Administrative Officer, and Inspector General.”

Despite the inability of the CHO to directly or indirectly hire or remove the Clerk, according to House Rules, the CHO has direct oversight of the Clerk. The CHO also has the responsibility to oversee appropriations, personnel decisions, and expenditures of the Clerk.

The CHO provides the following critical functions in relation to the Officers of the House:

- The three Officers of the House must work together on several administrative areas including: finance and accounting issues; purchasing and procurement issues; technology issues; issues relating to media and support services; and human resources issues. The CHO provides for the oversight to ensure that the three Officers work together on key cross organizational issues.
- Rule X 1.(h)(2) provides for the CHO to oversee the audit activities of the House. As such, the CHO functions as an Audit Committee to ensure that the House is accountable for its public funding.
- The CHO ensures that the goals and objectives of the Members in general and the Speaker in particular are met.
- The CHO operates as a bipartisan committee to provide oversight to each of the Officers. The Rules of the 104th Congress created the CHO to replace the House Administration Committee from the 103rd Congress. The change in name of the Committee reflects the change in philosophy of this Committee from administration by elected officials to oversight of professional administrators by elected officials.

Role of the Clerk. The Clerk has certain responsibilities detailed in Rule III regarding its interaction with the CHO and Speaker, including:

7. “In addition to any other reports required by the Speaker or the Committee on House Oversight, the Clerk shall report to the Committee on House Oversight not later than 45 days following the close of each semiannual period ending on June 30 or on December 31 on the financial and operational status of each function under the jurisdiction of the Clerk. Each report shall include financial statements, a description or explanation of current operations, the implementation of new policies and procedures, and future plans for each function.”

8. "The Clerk shall fully cooperate with the appropriate offices and persons in the performance of reviews and audits of financial records and administrative operations."

Thus, the Clerk has a responsibility to provide the CHO an accounting of its operations as part of the oversight by the CHO.

A summary of the major responsibilities of the Clerk according to Rule III is as follows:

- Accept the credentials of the Members-elect.
- Make the entries and journals of the proceedings of the House, including floor and Committee proceedings.
- Endorse bills passed by the body.
- Read the required papers in the House.
- Receive messages from the President and from the Senate on behalf of the House.
- Distribute House and Senate documents to House staff and distribute House documents to the public.
- Serve as custodian of all House records and documents.
- Maintain the House voting machine.

The Clerk is organized into seven divisions, as follows.

- **Office of Legislative Operations** receives and processes legislative information introduced in the House including introduced bills and resolutions, House passed measures, and the daily House Journal.
- **Office of Legislative Computer Systems** manages the electronic flow of the Clerk's legislative information and serves as the liaison to House Information Resources (HIR).
- **Office of Official Reporters** arranges for stenographic reporting coverage of committee and subcommittee hearings, markups and meetings, and prepares committee activity reports for publication in the *Congressional Record* as it relates to the Daily Digest.
- **Office of Legislative Information (Legis)** is a computer-supported, centralized legislative status service for storing, retrieving, and disseminating information. Legis serves as the primary source for information on the status of legislation.
- **Legislative Resource Center (LRC)** combines several reference, record-keeping and public information responsibilities of the Clerk's office, namely the Office of the Historian, House Library, House Document Room, and Office of Records and

Registration. LRC is the depository for the official in-house collection of House documents, and serves as the reference center for all information, including printed legislation, pertaining to the House.

- **Office of House Employment Counsel (OHEC)** is responsible for providing pre-paid legal services to all House Members, Committees, and Officers in the area of labor and employment law. The office represents the above in litigation, as well as providing counsel, advice and training in labor related matters. OHEC is a new office, created in the 104th Congress as a result of the enactment of the Congressional Accountability Act.
- **Office of General Counsel** provides legal advice to Members, Committees, Officers, and employees of the House on matters related to their official duties, other than matters under the purveyance of OHEC. The office also represents the Members, Committees, Officers, and employees of the House, both as parties and witnesses, in litigation arising from or relating to the performance of their official duties and responsibilities.

In addition, the House Page Program and the cloak rooms are under the administrative supervision of the Clerk. The House Page Program employs youths in the eleventh grade of high school who are nominated by Members. The Pages live and work in Washington, D.C. near the Capitol and assist Members on the Floor. The cloak room is an ante room (one for the Majority Party and one for the Minority Party) where Members may make phone calls, get a snack, and meet briefly away from the Floor.

Objective, Scope, And Methodology

The objective of our review of the Clerk was to provide an operational assessment of the Clerk during the 104th Congress. Specifically, we examined the existence and use of performance measures, and policies and procedures in use by the Clerk. We also assessed the implementation status of all four recommendations in the prior OIG audit report entitled *Opportunities Exist To Improve The Generation Of Legislative Information In The Office Of The Clerk* (Report No. 95-CLK-13, dated July 18, 1995) and baseline objectives presented by the Clerk to the 104th Congress.

We conducted our audit in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our review included the following steps:

- Conducted entrance interview with the Clerk;
- Conducted interviews and walk-through tours with each Clerk division head and other Clerk staff;
- Gathered and analyzed documents related to operations, organization, staffing, policies and procedures, performance standards, and prior reviews and audits; and

- Surveyed employees of the Clerk and analyzed responses to determine job activities and responsibilities.

Internal Controls

We reviewed the implementation of internal control recommendations from the prior 1995 OIG audit report (see below—*Prior Audit Coverage*). We also reviewed the Clerk's internal control process over the implementation of prior audit recommendations (see the *Other Matters* section).

Prior Audit Coverage

OIG audit report, *Opportunities Exist To Improve The Generation Of Legislative Information In The Office Of The Clerk* (Report No. 95-CLK-13, dated July 18, 1995). This audit evaluated the efficiency of the information generation and dissemination by the Office of the Clerk and made four recommendations to improve those activities. The Clerk agreed to all the recommendations and has fully implemented three recommendations and partially implemented one recommendation. (See Exhibit.)

II. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding A: The Cloak Rooms Appear To Have Several Underutilized Personnel Positions

The cloak rooms appear to have several underutilized personnel positions. Potentially, annual savings of at least \$286,000 could be achieved by consolidating functions and reducing positions.

The Clerk maintains two cloak rooms for the House Members—one each for the Majority and Minority. At present, each cloak room is staffed with seven positions: a manager, an assistant manager, a telephone assistant, two food service positions and two maintenance positions. Thus, there are a total of four maintenance positions one of which is responsible for cleaning the Speaker's Lobby and a second is responsible for cleaning the Floor area. Each cloak room also has one maintenance position. (Both the Majority and Minority parties have an "inside" maintenance employee who is responsible for the upkeep of each of the parties cloak rooms.) In addition, there are several pages assigned to each cloak room to run errands.

When the House is in session, the cloak rooms are open from 9 a.m. until when the House concludes its meetings for the day. The cloak rooms have two major service functions: (1) delivering telephone messages to and from Members and (2) providing food service to Members. The facilities are not spacious, and do not serve as conference or meeting rooms. Members pick up messages and have an opportunity to eat snacks while the House is in session. The cloak room staff also calls Members to inform them of the status of Floor proceedings.

Since the Manager or Assistant Manager shares telephone duties with the telephone assistant, there could be a consolidation of functions by eliminating the two assistant manager positions so that two people would cover the reception area, rather than three. Eliminating the two cloak room assistant manager positions would result in savings in salaries and benefits of approximately \$155,000, assuming midpoint of the HS-10 grade level for each position with a salary of approximately \$60,000 per position and a 30 percent fringe benefit rate.

Given the size of the cloak rooms (less than 5,000 square feet, each), there appears to be no need for an "inside" maintenance position in either cloak room. Based on public sector benchmarks of 100,000 square feet per maintenance worker per day, maintenance functions of the cloak rooms could be assimilated by the Floor and Speaker's Lobby maintenance positions. Elimination of the two cloak room "inside" maintenance positions would result in savings in salaries and benefits of approximately \$74,000, assuming the midpoint of the HS-04 grade level for each position with a salary of approximately \$28,500 per position and a 30 percent fringe benefit rate.

The food service function does not provide cafeteria or sit down style meals to Members, but rather it provides light snacks as needed in a small buffet setting. Since the food service

personnel do not provide table service to Members, it does not appear that two positions are necessary for this service. If the need arises, cloak room pages have the capacity to assist with food service. Eliminating either the assistant food manager or food manager position in each cloak room would result in savings in salaries and benefits of \$57,000 to \$74,000 annually, assuming the midpoint of the HS-02 and HS-04 grade level, respectively and a 30 percent fringe benefit rate.

The table below summarizes the total annual savings from eliminating the positions discussed in the above paragraphs.

	Range	
	Low	High
Eliminate Two Assistant Manager Positions	\$ 155,000	\$ 155,000
Eliminate Two Cloak Room Maintenance Positions	\$ 74,000	\$ 74,000
Eliminate Assistant Food Manager or Food Manager Position	\$ 57,000	\$ 74,000
Total Savings From Eliminating Positions	<u>\$ 286,000</u>	<u>\$ 303,000</u>

Recommendation

We recommend that the Clerk evaluate the staffing levels by conducting a position management study of the two cloak rooms and develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to eliminate the following positions, if supported by the evaluation:

- The assistant manager position in each cloak room.
- A maintenance position in each cloak room.
- The assistant food manager or food manager position in each cloak room.

Management Response

The Clerk agrees to study this matter further within the broader context of her current review of staffing/reporting responsibilities of the service groups and will forward a proposal to the Committee on House Oversight during FY 1997. The Clerk does, however, believe that our review during a recess period did not allow the opportunity to illustrate the operational responsibilities and pace the Republican and Democratic Cloak Rooms face during a legislative period. The diversity and front-line duties of the staff to assist Members of both parties with technical legislative support, current information, and basic office and related support needs far exceeds the currently available resources of the Cloak Room staff. While supplemented with the services of House Pages, the needs for experienced supervisory personnel must be understood.

Office of Inspector General Comments

The planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendation.

Finding B: Staffing Levels And Mix Required Within The Office Of General Counsel Needs To Be Reviewed

The Office of the General Counsel (OGC) has a five-to-five ratio of administrative/support to management/professional positions. Typical professional service organizations have an administrative/support to management/professional ratio of one-to-five or less. Cost savings can be achieved by eliminating unnecessary positions. OGC has not conducted a current position management study to determine the appropriate staffing levels required.

The administrative/support positions within OGC are: Legal Secretary, Paralegal, Special Assistant to the General Counsel, Office Manager, and Receptionist. The management/professional staff positions are: General Counsel, Deputy Counsel, and three Assistant General Counsel positions. The Paralegal position has been vacant since June 1996. During the audit, OGC management indicated that work-products have not been negatively affected by the absence of this position.

OGC also indicated that its workload was uneven and that it was not necessary to incur overtime to complete their tasks when the workload was high. Therefore, it appears that OGC has excess capacity at certain times of the year. Estimated cost savings from eliminating the vacant Paralegal position is approximately \$42,000 in annual compensation including benefits, assuming the midpoint of the HS-7 grade level and a 30 percent fringe benefit rate.

Currently, OGC has not developed workload utilization standards to assess staffing levels and the staffing mix. Furthermore, OGC has not established policy and procedures for performance evaluations. Without evaluation or utilization data, OGC is unable to accurately determine personnel requirements and the optimal staff ratio.

A position management study, to assist OGC in evaluating optimum staffing practices, would indicate any savings that could result from reduced staffing to meet workload requirements during non-peak periods and the use of contract legal services to meet workload requirements during peak periods. A position management study would also assess utilization of staff to determine the staffing mix that would be most appropriate to deliver and maintain current service levels. The staffing mix could include reclassifying positions from administrative positions to legal staff or could include reclassifying legal staff positions to administrative positions. Because of the unique service provided by OGC, a separate study would best answer the staffing level and mix criteria.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Clerk perform a position management study to review the OGC staffing and develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to restructure the staffing of the OGC and eliminate at least the Paralegal position.

Management Response

The Clerk agrees to begin a staffing review and will forward a proposal to the Committee on House Oversight during FY 1997. The Clerk will begin a comprehensive study of personnel and legal demands on OGC to determine whether reductions can be made.

Office of Inspector General Comments

The planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendation.

Finding C: Room And Board Fees For Pages Have Not Increased For 13 Years

The stipend for Pages has increased 10 times since 1983 with no corresponding increase in the room and board fees. As a result, the House is currently subsidizing the program by at least \$166,320 a year.

The Page Program provides a financial stipend to participants for services provided to cover certain meals, dormitory housing, and continued high school education. On January 3, 1983, Congress authorized, in Public Law 98-51, the establishment of a Page Residence Revolving Fund for monthly deposits of \$300 from Pages' stipends for lodging, meals, and related services furnished to the Pages. The \$300 monthly charge is intended to offset costs for room and board. The monthly fee for the Pages' room and board has not changed in the past 13 years. However, the stipend has increased 10 times over this period from \$765 per month in 1983 to \$1,092 per month in 1996. Thus, each Page still pay \$300 per month (deducted from their stipends) for the cost of meals and to defray residence hall costs. The approximate cost of meals is \$185 per month, which leaves \$115 available for housing costs (as depicted in *Table 1*).

Monthly Page fees for room and board	\$300
Less approximate monthly meal costs	<u>(\$185)</u>
Remainder to be applied to housing costs	<u>\$115</u>

Table 1

Based on the Fiscal Year 1995-1996 Page Program budget for the Residence Hall alone, the direct costs per Page associated with housing was \$325 per month. The budget includes the salaries and benefits of the residence hall staff; however, the budget does not include costs for utilities, repairs, or maintenance. Therefore, total actual costs for Page housing is higher than the budgeted \$325 per month. The total cost for both room and board is depicted in *Table 2*.

Monthly costs of the housing program	\$	325
Monthly costs for meals		<u>185</u>
Total monthly room and board costs	\$	510
Actual monthly room and board charged		<u>(300)</u>
Difference	\$	210
Number of Pages		66
Number of months		<u>12</u>
Total excess room and board charges	\$	<u>166,320</u>

Table 2

The Clerk believes that the intent of the Page Program is to provide a basic spending allowance for participants and recover a portion of the costs via the monthly charge. Nevertheless, we believe that this charge should be re-evaluated periodically, especially since the stipend has been increased 10 times in the last 13 years for a total of \$327.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Clerk perform a more detailed study of the Page Program to further quantify and refine the economic impacts associated with Page room and board, and submit a proposal to the Page Board for their review and action. The study should consider whether the \$300 amount Pages pay per month for room and board should be increased, and if so, by how much.

Management Response

The Clerk agrees to study this matter further and forward a proposal to the House Page Board during FY 1997. As an educational program, the Clerk believes the intent of the program is to provide a basic spending allowance for participants and recover a portion of the room and board costs via the monthly charges which may need to be evaluated periodically.

Office of Inspector General Comments

The planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendation.

Finding D: Page School Staff Appears To Be Underutilized

Page School teachers and the guidance counselor appear to be underutilized. Annual savings of at least \$271,000 could be achieved by restructuring the staff and reducing unnecessary positions.

Sixty-six Pages are enrolled in the Page School each year. Currently, the Page School staff includes a principal, administrative assistant, guidance counselor, and six teachers, all of whom are full-time employees. The Page School also employs three substitute teachers. Compared with educational benchmarks, the administrators and student-teacher ratio is high. Comparable numbers of students would typically dictate a need for one-half the number of teachers and one guidance counselor for eight hours per week.

Although generally certified in more than one area of instruction, teachers at the Page School teach only one subject. Consequently, about 7.5 full-time teachers are available to teach 66 students--that is an average of 8.8 students per teacher, or a student-teacher ratio of 9-to-1. If teachers each taught two subjects, and the number of teachers was decreased from six to three, the average number of students per teacher would double to 17.6, for a student-teacher ratio of 18-to-1. This would still result in a very good average number of students per teacher when compared to that of high schools in Washington, D.C. and its suburbs. Currently, the average for a Washington, D.C. private school classroom is 17, and the average for a public school classroom is 25. Also, the average for public schools is 28 in Fairfax County and 26.5 in Montgomery County.

While we recognize that the diversity of educational backgrounds and academic levels exhibited by students in the Page School exceeds that of traditional educational institutions, the potential for savings must be considered. Estimated savings from restructuring three full-time teaching positions and the guidance counselor position, as suggested above, would be approximately \$271,000 in salaries and benefits, assuming midpoint of the grade level for each position and a 30 percent fringe benefit rate.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Clerk perform a more detailed study of the Page School staffing levels and submit a proposal to the Page Board for their review and action. The study should weigh the effects of increasing the ratio of students to teachers against potential cost savings.

Management Response

The Clerk agrees to study this matter further and forward a proposal to the House Page Board during FY 1997. However, the Clerk believes the compressed school day and the need for specialized professional instructional staff to teach the House Page students makes this proposal difficult. If the student-teacher ratio were changed to reduce costs, it would raise multiple concerns. As example, as part of the re-certification deemed by the Middle

States Association earlier this year, the objectives of expanding, not maintaining or reducing, the current academic subjects available to students, were clearly articulated.

Office of Inspector General Comments

The planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendation.

III. OTHER MATTERS

During the 104th Congress, the House of Representatives has undertaken extensive measures to improve operations and efficiencies, as well as financial reporting and accountability. These measures evolved, in part, from numerous recommendations made in several audits on the operations of each of the three House Officers. As a result of the findings and recommendations included in the audit reports, considerable progress has been made to date. However, due to the number and complexity of the recommendations, additional procedures are needed to ensure that recommendation status is kept up-to-date, and that implementation is supported by adequate documentation. While the Clerk only had a limited number of findings and recommendations over the past two years, we believe a system for tracking and managing implementation of prior audit recommendations should be implemented which is consistent among all three Officers of the House.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Clerk work with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Sergeant at Arms to establish a consistent system for tracking and managing the implementation of prior audit recommendations.

Management Response

The Clerk agrees that such coordination is important to the success of the institution and the implementation of various audits. The Clerk also highlighted the responsibilities of the Committee on House Oversight regarding the daily coordination of all House Officer activities.

Office of Inspector General Comments

The planned actions are responsive to the issues we identified, and when fully implemented, should satisfy the intent of our recommendation.

STATUS OF PRIOR AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Opportunities Exist To Improve The Generation Of Legislative Information In The Office Of The Clerk
 Report No. 95-CLK-13

No.	Recommendations (Addressed to the Clerk)	Implementation Status			Comments	Estimated Implementation Date
		Complete	In Process	Not Started		
A.	Develop a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight (CHO), to implement policies and procedures regarding information dissemination.	1			The Proposed Document Management System and Electronic Configuration within the Office of the Clerk was submitted to the CHO on May 7, 1996. The CHO adopted a resolution supporting the proposal on May 23, 1996. Until the document management system is fully operational, documents electronically disseminated by House Information Resources (HIR) contain a disclaimer that the document is the unofficial version; only documents produced by GPO are the official version.	Not Applicable
B.1.	Publicize the availability of documents on the Internet.	1			The Document Distribution Policy states that when the supply of 150 copies of a particular document available to the general public is depleted, the Document Room will refer customers to the Internet and other sources. During September 1996, the Document Room received 11,418 phone calls which were referred to the Internet and other sources.	Not Applicable
B.2.	Evaluate the cost of printing documents on demand and, if cost-effective, prepare a proposal, for approval by the Committee on House Oversight, to install demand printers in the Document Room.	1			The Document Production Volume/Cost Summary for DocuTech equipment was completed on June 2, 1995. DocuTech equipment has been installed in the Capitol Document Room for print on demand needs, subject to guidelines issued by the Joint Committee on Printing.	Not Applicable
C.	Improve electronic interface between the Clerk's office and GPO by working with HIR and GPO to establish a more comprehensive electronic data transfer capability.		1		Work is in progress to improve the electronic interface between the Clerk's Office and GPO. A test was completed in March 1996, and a demonstration of Bill 2000 was accomplished during September 1996. The interface is planned to be operational at the beginning of the 105 th Congress.	January 1997
Total		<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>			

Robin H. Carle
Clerk

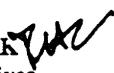
Linda S. Rabe
Deputy Clerk

Office of the Clerk
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-6601

December 18, 1996

MEMORANDUM

TO: JOHN LAINHART, INSPECTOR GENERAL
U. S. House of Representatives

FROM: ROBIN H. CARLE, CLERK 
U. S. House of Representatives

SUBJECT: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO AUDIT

Please find attached the Office of the Clerk comments regarding the **Audit Report - Opportunities Exist To Improve The Management Of The Office Of The Clerk.**

If you need further information or have additional comments, please feel free to call.

cc: Robert B. Frey, III

Finding A: The Cloak Rooms Appear To Have Several Underutilized Personnel Positions.

The Clerk agrees to study this matter further within the broader context of her current review of staffing/reporting responsibilities of the service groups and will forward a proposal to the Committee on House Oversight during FY'97.

The Clerk does, however, believe that the KPMG review during a recess period did not allow the opportunity to illustrate to the auditors the operational responsibilities and pace the Republican and Democratic Cloak Rooms face during a legislative period. The diversity and frontline duties of the staff to assist Members of both parties with technical legislative support, current information and basic office and related support needs far exceeds the currently available resources of the Cloak Room staff. While supplemented with the services of House Pages, the needs for experienced supervisory personnel must be understood.

Finding B: Staffing Levels And Mix Required Within The Office of General Counsel Needs To Be Reviewed.

The Clerk agrees to begin a staffing review and will forward a proposal to the Committee on House Oversight during FY'97.

The audit suggests a comprehensive study of personnel and legal demands on and services of this office be conducted to determine whether reductions can be made. The Clerk will begin such an evaluation with an eye on a possible recommendation to reduce the number of support personnel. As a part of the study the Clerk may request the Committee on House Oversight consider the effects the splintering of legal support services for the House among House Officers has had on personnel levels.

Finding C: Room And Board Fees For Pages Have Not Increased For 13 Years.

The Clerk agrees to study this matter further and forward a proposal to the House Page Board during FY-97.

As an educational program, the Clerk believes the intent of the program is to provide a basic spending allowance for participants and recover a portion of the room and board costs via the monthly charges which may need to be evaluated periodically.

Finding D: Page School Staff Appears To Be Underutilized.

The Clerk agrees to study this matter further and forward a proposal to the House Page Board during FY'97.

The compressed school day and the need for specialized professional instructional staff to teach the House Page students makes this proposal difficult. If the student-teacher ratio were changed to reduce costs, it would raise multiple concerns. As example, as part of the re-certification

deemed by the Middle States Association earlier this year, the objectives of expanding, not maintaining or reducing, the current academic subjects available to students, were clearly articulated.

IG Recommendation:

The Inspector General recommends that the Clerk work with the Chief Administrative Officer and the Sergeant at Arms to establish a consistent system for tracking and managing the implementation of prior audit recommendations.

Management Response:

The Clerk agrees that such coordination is important to the success of the institution and the implementation of various audits. As a point of fact, the Clerk would also highlight the responsibilities of the Committee on House Oversight regarding the daily coordination of all House Officer activities. Further, the Inspector General no doubt has in place a tracking system. Perhaps it has functions which could be easily transferred to the individual officers thereby offering consistency not only among the officers' tracking systems but the Inspector General and Committee on House Oversight's systems as well.